

## 155-7 THE POLICIES

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**To accomplish great things, we must not only act  
but also dream, not only plan but also believe.**

Anatole France

The preceding parts of this plan have developed a vision of a greenspace and greenway network as a central element of Rhode Island's future landscape, and an important component of the lives of its citizens. This vision is a goal that will require the concerted efforts of all Rhode Islanders to effect. This part of the plan enunciates policies intended to assist the integration of greenspace and greenways into future landscape decision making.



The policies of this part are established to promote the creation of the statewide greenspace and greenway system recommended by the plan, to advance protection of the essential natural and cultural values greenspace provides to Rhode Island, and to expand opportunities to enjoy the benefits of greenspace for present and future Rhode Islanders. Policies are intended to provide general guidance to State, local and private efforts undertaken in support of the plan, and to also provide a foundation for assessing the consistency of future proposals which may (positively or negatively) impact upon attainment of the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are grouped under a general category and four topical themes, which represent critical spheres of human interaction and impact upon greenspace. (Note: Policy numbering is for reference only, and does not connote differential priority or importance.)

### ❖ *General Policies for Greenspace and Greenways*

- G-1 Promote compact development patterns, urban/suburban infill and reuse, and clustered, village-centered rural growth. Foster a land conservation ethic by stressing space- and resource-efficient designs in order to minimize unnecessary fragmentation of greenspace.
- G-2 Emphasize creation of the greenspace system in state land protection and acquisition investments. Give priority to projects that directly advance realization of the greenspace system.
- G-3 Utilize the diverse array of land protection techniques available (i.e., creative development, regulation, private-public partnerships, purchase of easements and other less-than-fee-simple instruments, and full acquisition) to best advantage in safeguarding the values of greenspace in the most effective and cost-efficient manner.
- G-4 Manage the public portions of the greenspace system to realize multiple values and social benefits, wherever possible. Avoid restricting public lands to an exclusive use, except where warranted by public safety, or resource protection and sustainability concerns (e.g., certain water supply resources, rare species habitats, and other fragile areas).

- G-5 Encourage local promotion of creative development techniques that conserve land, respect natural and cultural landscape features, provide publicly-usable open space, and produce aesthetically and environmentally harmonious communities.
- G-6 Use the local comprehensive planning process to insure local cognizance of state goals and policies for the greenspace and greenway system, and to provide for effective and consistent municipal participation in creating the system.
- G-7 Provide a sustainable revenue source affording dependable and adequate funding for a public greenspace purchase program.
- G-8 Direct new growth and development to areas and locations that minimize the potential for negative impacts upon the greenspace system.
- G-9 Incorporate a greenspace buffer within major new developments whenever the potential for discordance exists between the type, scale, or effects of the new facility and existing or planned adjacent land uses.
- G-10 Nurture partnerships with private sector greenspace protectors and others who have a stake in the greenspace system.

❖ *Greenspace's ecological functions:* Greenspace is, and must remain, Rhode Island's web of life. Home to plant and animal, and host to environmental cycles requisite to human life, the greenspace and greenway network will be an increasingly crucial environmental safety net as more of Rhode Island becomes developed in the future. Policies must safeguard the critical ecological functions of greenspace for their intrinsic value, as well as their utility to human environmental needs.

- E-1 Protect the physical and biological integrity of ecological systems and natural landscape units. Where possible, protect large, contiguous tracts of greenspace to meet the needs of certain wildlife species. Establish greenway corridors linking discrete parcels where such connections would not jeopardize management objectives for rare, endangered, or other species or communities of concern.
- E-2 Restore or re-establish natural greenspace values where they have been disturbed by development, especially within urban and suburban areas.
- E-3 Maximize reliance upon greenspace and greenways as *natural infrastructure* for non-structural solutions to water management problems, including: public water supply/demand management, water quality maintenance and restoration, and stormwater runoff and flood control.
- E-4 In state natural resource regulatory programs, apply a high standard of protection to greenspace and greenway areas.

- E-5 Actively assert and fulfill the State's duty under the Public Trust Doctrine to protect public trust interests in areas historically subject to the ebb and flow of the tides, navigable freshwaters, and areas that influence these resources.
- E-6 Develop a greenspace monitoring system to quantify and track vital parameters of the state's environment.
- E-7 Encourage localities to develop and adopt woodland and street tree management ordinances and programs.

❖ *Greenspace and people*: In addition to its primary virtue as protector of natural and cultural resources essential to Rhode Island's future, it is vital that the greenspace and greenway system be relevant to the lives of present and future Rhode Islanders. Public policy must afford opportunities for people to access, enjoy and learn about the environment they live in. It should also strive to improve their social well-being and enrich their lives by offering recreation, leisure, and aesthetic character in the places they live and work.

- P-1 Particularly within urban areas where it is lacking, make retention, enhancement, or re-establishment of greenspace a priority consideration in all physical development and revitalization projects. Make provision or expansion of public access to greenspace and greenways a fundamental aspect of community and economic revitalization efforts.
- P-2 Promote public access to and usage of the greenspace system, wherever feasible and consistent with protection of the system's resource values.
- P-3 Use various aspects of greenspace and greenway projects as vehicles for advancing public environmental education, promoting public service and volunteerism, and providing job training/creation endeavors.
- P-4 Encourage Rhode Islanders to play a pro-active role in defining the future of their landscape through participation in land use planning and decision-making, support of "watchdog" and advocacy groups concerned with land use issues, and self-education in land use and environmental issues.
- P-5 Emphasize, in public health and social service programs, the connections between active public recreational use and aesthetic enjoyment of greenspace and personal health and vigor and social well-being.

- ❖ *Greenspace and the economy:* Greenspace has always been, and will continue to be, instrumental to economic growth. However, as recounted in Part Two, much of our economic gain throughout history has come at the expense of a diminished greenspace resource. Luckily, however, the last 20 years have witnessed a revolution in thinking about the relationship between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. Significant progress has been made--particularly in the developed world--on some environmental protection and restoration fronts. But, as the United Nation's 1992 *Conference on Environment and Development* (*Earth Summit*) made clear the time to change is growing perilously short. *Agenda21*, the report of the *Earth Summit*, throws down the gauntlet, in effect saying: we must embrace sustainable growth and reconcile economic needs with environmental capabilities, or suffer the consequences on a global scale. Taking a lead from this global initiative, Rhode Island's 21st century economy must emphasize not only productivity and growth--but also sustainability, compatibility with the landscape and the communities it serves, and minimum impact on critical greenspace resources.

- EC-1 Develop a statewide or regional, cooperative approach to the siting of new large-scale developments, which benefits all participants and reduces potential for duplicative and environmentally wasteful local "competition" for industrial and other growth. Seek ways to minimize the pressure that the existing property taxation system creates for conversion of open space to "higher value", developed land uses.
- EC-2 Avoid direct and indirect public subsidization or support of projects which would significantly and negatively affect greenspace areas or greenways. The federal Coastal Barrier Resources Act provides a statutory model for how such a limitation could work.
- EC-3 Encourage a "green as you grow" approach that links expansion of the greenspace and greenway system to community growth and development.
- EC-4 Recognize the connection between greenspace system resources and a vibrant tourism sector by making greenspace protection a vital *plank* of state economic development policy. Protect and promote, consistent with their sustainability, Rhode Island's natural areas and features as eco-tourism resources, and insure that tourism-associated impacts upon greenspace resources are avoided or minimized.
- EC-5 Encourage private sector investment in the provision and maintenance of public greenspace and greenway amenities, as a corporate/civic responsibility.
- EC-6 Where appropriate, link the granting of tax credits/holidays and other public subsidies to private enterprises to the avoidance of adverse impacts on greenspace, and/or creation of public greenspace or greenway amenities.

❖ *Greenspace and transportation:* Our present transportation system--with its emphasis on the highway mode--has been instrumental to much of our past social and economic growth. Increasingly, however, the "costs" of our reliance upon the automobile are also being seen by many as exacting too high a price upon the environment (via air and water pollution), our communities (increased traffic and modified landscapes), and our lives (in terms of the time-penalties and frustration of long-distance commuting and congestion). This realization has not yet reached a threshold level necessary to stimulate more than a few of us to routinely make personal choices designed to reduce or avoid our reliance upon the automobile; however, it has begun to be evidenced via a policy shift on the federal level. Congressional enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 represents a clarion call for setting a new direction towards a more diverse transportation system. It offers considerable opportunity for a "greener" transportation future, which would support attainment of the greenspace system.

- T-1 Give high priority to transportation system investments that expand modal choice, offer potential for reducing pollution and energy consumption, and have minimal impacts upon greenspace.
- T-2 Accelerate development of the statewide bikeway network component of the greenspace system to provide a low-energy-use, low-polluting transportation option for Rhode Island.
- T-3 Plan and develop a statewide, interconnected system of state, local, and/or private walkways.
- T-4 Encourage community and volunteer efforts in planning, designing, constructing, and operating/maintaining trails and bikeways as a means to reduce cost and accelerate completion of the statewide bikeway/trail network.
- T-5 Promote bicycling, walking and other non-polluting, energy conserving travel choices by providing information, constructing or subsidizing facilities and services, and encouraging employers' support and advocacy of such mode choices.
- T-6 Require all major new developments to provide for alternative transportation features and facilities (bikeways, trails, bike parking/storage), wherever appropriate, as a supplement to, or (in certain instances) replacements for automobile facilities (roads, parking areas).
- T-7 Discourage municipal abandonment of minimum maintenance (e.g., dirt) rural roads or public ways that now or could function as components of a municipal or statewide trail network. Similarly, discourage the unnecessary paving and upgrading of such facilities that would decrease their utility or desirability for non-motorized travel modes, unless non-motorized usage is provided for.
- T-8 Consider the relationship of roads to the greenspace system as a favorable criterion in the designation of scenic highways.
- T-9 Develop and instill a greenspace ethic in design and engineering of the transportation system. Avoid transportation infrastructure projects that would directly or indirectly significantly harm, diminish, or destroy the identified resource values embodied in the greenspace system. Require the preservation or protection of important natural and cultural resources embedded in the greenspace

system, the mitigation of detrimental impacts upon them, and the replacement of any resource values destroyed or irretrievably damaged by transportation infrastructure.

- T-10 Manage utility corridors to enhance their value as greenspace and to capture their potential, wherever possible, for linear recreational opportunities.
- T-11 Avoid disposal of state-owned highway corridor land that affords open space value to the community, or which absorbs pollutants and buffers adjoining land uses from the highway-related impacts.

